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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 000586

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [IZ](#)

SUBJECT: PRT KIRKUK: KURDISH BROTHERHOOD VIEWS ON THE
TURKMAN BOYCOTT

REF: A. BAGHDAD 456

[1](#)B. 07 BAGHDAD 4008

Classified By: Kirkuk PRT Leader Howard Keegan for Reasons 1.4 (b,d)

[1](#)1. (U) This is a Kirkuk Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) message.

[1](#)2. (C) Summary and Comment: Kirkuk Provincial Council members Ali Al-Salhi and Awad M. Ameen (Kirkuk Brotherhood League-KBL) told us February 14 that the KBL had accepted the Turkman bloc's request to resume negotiations and called for a stronger PRT role in local political development. The KBL is prepared to grant most, if not all, of the Turkman bloc's requests as the KBL currently understands them. Regarding the Provincial Powers Law (PPL), Awad explained that the relative inaction of the Provincial Council (PC) to date was due to the lack of a firm legal basis on which to operate, claiming that the Transitional Administrative Law had repealed CPA 71 and all previous provincial powers authorities without establishing new ones. He said the PPL would provide a framework for establishing local council and administrator roles and responsibilities. Regarding the appeal for more robust PRT engagement, PRT believes the KBL is seeking efforts analogous to the PRT's 2007 role in brokering the KBL-Arab bloc agreement. That role included pressure on Kurdistan Regional Government-based parties to allow the KBL latitude in negotiating an agreement. End Summary and Comment.

[1](#)3. (C) Ali and Awad said the PC public relations committee and the PC Chair are reconvening negotiations with the Turkman bloc, with the first session scheduled for February

[1](#)24. Ali had just met with representatives of the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) to clear the KBL's negotiating stance and strategy. Awad was still meeting with them at the beginning of the conversation held in Ali's office. Ali felt that the Turkman bloc's request to resume negotiations was a positive sign and the Turkmen would return to the council after the negotiation. Neither he nor Awad admitted having any detailed knowledge of President Talibani's recent meeting (Ref A) with the Turkman bloc, particularly his endorsement of the Turkman demands.

[1](#)4. (C) Ali mentioned that options on the negotiating table included a rotation plan for the post of Governor, the appointment of a Turkman Deputy Governor, and recognition of Turkmani as an official provincial language. On the last point, Ali admitted he was unsure if the PC negotiating team could go so far as to allow usage of Turkmani on the multi-lingual sign at the Kirkuk Government Building (KGB). Ali commented that Turkmani was in any event already a de facto official language, since it was being taught in "I don't know how many schools." With regard to the KGB sign, Ali thought usage of the most common four languages was sufficient. He also estimated it would be easy to accede to the Turkman bloc's demand that harassment of the Turkman

Education DG cease, since Ali did not think any harrassment was taking place.

¶15. (C) Awad said the provincial council currently does not have the authority to legislate, only to review projects and to approve them or return them to the Provincial Contracting Center (PCC) or to act on other matters requested by other competent authorities. Both Awad and Ali emphasized that, in their opinions, the Transitional Administrative Law had superseded CPA 71 and that no legal basis for independent Council action existed. Based on this lack of authority, the only tool the Council could employ to influence the allegedly "inefficient" and "poor" administration of the province was to cajole the Governor to either assert himself or to get him to voluntarily resign. In a previous meeting, Governor Abdul Rakhman told IPA0 that he felt he had little legal basis for independent action either, indicating that the lack of clear legal authorities was the primary obstacle to improving local governance capacity.

¶16. (SBU) At the end of the meeting, both Ali and Awad called for the PRT to be "more assertive" in its efforts at political and economic reconstruction, stating that only with such support would the situation change. This appeal was presented in terms of the PRT being an offset to other outside actors, including the the PUK and KDP.

¶17. (C) Comment: PRT played a significant, back-channel, role in brokering the December 2007 agreement that brought the Arab bloc back into the Kirkuk PC (Ref B). That role included pressuring the KRG-based parties to allow more independence to the KBL so that it could more flexibly negotiate with the Arab bloc. Being able to negotiate independently allowed the KBL the political space for the

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give and take necessary to reach agreement with the Arab bloc. The KBL call for a more assertive PRT presence in negotiating with the Turkman bloc likely echoes the 2007 experiences. PRT assesses that both Awad and Ali feel that the PRT's role in counter-balancing the influence of Kurdish parties was key to reaching agreement with the Arab bloc and that they are now calling for similar stepped-up PRT involvement. PRT had already planned to engage the PUK and KDP to set the stage for these negotiations and those engagements are now underway.

¶18. (C) Comment Cont'd: President Talibani's endorsement may have strengthened the Turkman bloc's perception of their own negotiating strength and the resumption of negotiations is likely little more than another opportunity to present their demands with no negotiation. The issue of the KGB sign, for example, probably involves a demand from a specific Turkman leader, Ali Mahdi, known for his tendency to derail past negotiations before they even begin. PRT will not endorse any negotiating options or agreements that violate the KBL-Arab bloc 13 point agreement. Attempting to negotiate such a violation is a probable Turkman bloc objective, with a view to convincing the Arab bloc to resume the boycott. End Comment.

¶19. (SBU) Biographical note: Both individuals are Kurdish and KBL members of the Provincial Council. Awad is a former communist and speaks in terms of "scientific bases" for analyzing social and cultural situations. Al-Salhi is a local businessman, holds U.S. citizenship and has strong ties in both Iraq and the United States. Both speak English. Both spoke Arabic and Kurdish during telephone calls taken during the meeting. End note.
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